

The Integrated Home

The Integrator's Voice

Integrator
uses solution
to perfect
business-
winning
proposals

By Leslie Stevens

In today's competitive environment, system integrators need to present a professional image in order to win jobs. This starts with a comprehensive proposal that accounts for all critical items related to the installation. Well-documented proposals show perspective customers the contractor understands the entire project, facilitating the sale. In addition, complete proposals reduce forgotten costs and avoid future confrontation with the customer. The end result is a happy client who then sends referrals.

One dealer, Twilight Sounds of Clayton, Calif., has developed a repeatable formula for well-designed, professional proposals.

Q. How and when did Twilight Sounds get started in the industry?

A. Twilight Sounds was formed in summer of 2000, when founder Justin Johnston was attending St. Mary's College of California in Moraga. He was a full-time college student with an entrepreneurial drive. After spending two years at a local A/V company, he felt it was time to move on. Armed with his experience and learned lessons from his former employer, he founded Twilight Sounds.

Q. How do you go about generating leads, which leads to the proposal process?

A. Our current method for leads are all referral-based. We have been around long enough now where typical advertising and contemporary methods are no longer necessary. The early years were rough. With our network in place for almost seven years



now, we can rely on the buzz around town from our current and past clients to keep us busy.

Q. What items do you typically include in your proposals?

A. Proposals include all aspects of our projects. We include design, products, installation labor, and set-up and training of the end user in one package price. This allows us to give the homeowner a more up-front project cost with minimal, if any, surprises towards the end.

Q. How do you package and deliver proposals?

A. We package and deliver proposals based on our client's request. Some clients request their proposals simply be e-mailed to them while others would like to sit down and review their proposal when ready.

Q. How did you develop this repeatable proposal template or where did you get it from?

A. In our early years, we were assembling our proposals with Microsoft Word and Excel. This was a very tedious and time-consuming method for proposal generation. We switched to D-tools software and streamlined our proposals. This software made a huge difference in how we



Spotlight On: Justin Johnson

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do business. It allowed us to gain a better handle on our entire back-end business process.

Q. What is your success rate with this process versus before you started using it? What feedback have you been given by the customer?

A. I would have to say our success rate is immeasurable at this point. I can't imagine going back to the old way, and it scares me to think how much business we could have lost had we not switched. As soon as we switched to D-tools, we received numerous notations on how complete and professional our proposals appeared. D-tools helped us tremendously.

Q. In addition to helping you with sales, what other areas has this repeatable solution helped you? (e.g. accounting for all costs, adequately loading trucks, etc.)

A. Not only has D-tools helped us with sales, it also has made huge differences in how we review job profitability, order

processing and accounting. At any time, I can pull up a job or proposal and determine what the profits are on that particular project. The software also allows me to send my purchase orders directly to manufacturers, minimizing mistakes. I've just recently upgraded my software to link up with my QuickBooks. This helps tremendously with tracking accounting and saves time with data entry.

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